

Reviews of Books, Software, and Audiovisual Materials

Synopsis of Neurology. Richard Lechtenberg. Lea & Febiger, Philadelphia, 1991, 173 pp, \$19.75 (paper). ISBN 0-82128-1356.

This pocket-sized paperback book provides, as suggested by the title, a readable synopsis of the field of neurology. It includes numerous black-and-white illustrations and useful tables listing various causes of certain disorders, drugs of choice for treatment of common problems, drug doses, etc. In the preface, the author states that the book is directed to house officers and medical students. He points out that the book is organized primarily around signs and symptoms "because that is what the physician must deal with when he or she first sees the patient."

Although the book provides an accessible source of information on a variety of common problems in neurology, the chapters relating to specific signs and symptoms, such as syncope, weakness, or headache, consist of descriptions of the individual disorders causing that problem, but do not provide the reader with a plan for distinguishing among the possible etiologies of the condition. For example, the chapter on headache provides descriptions of tension headache, migraine, and the other common causes of headache, but no guide that the resident or student seeing a patient complaining of headache can use to reach a diagnosis. On the other hand, the descriptions of the various conditions are probably too brief to satisfy the practicing physician who wants to review current thinking on the diagnosis and management of, for example, myasthenia gravis.

In summary, the lack of direction for reaching a diagnosis with a patient with a neurologic complaint limits the usefulness of this book for

its intended target audiences of medical students and house officers, and its brevity, although a distinct advantage for someone who wishes a quick broad review of neurology, limits the usefulness of the book as a reference for the practicing physician.

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Manual of Clinical Oncology. D.K. Hossfeld, C.D. Sherman, R.R. Love, F.X. Bosch (eds). Springer-Verlag, New York, 1990, 391 pp, price not available. ISBN 0-387-52769-9.

As its preface states, the International Union Against Cancer addresses the *Manual of Clinical Oncology* to medical students and nononcologists. The stated purpose is to provide a concise primer outlining the major aspects of cancer. The book is divided into two parts. Part I deals with general principles of cancer including epidemiology, screening, therapy, rehabilitation, and management. Part II is a more detailed description of specific common cancers.

This book is excellent for individuals at various levels of medical education. Medical students would benefit because everything needed in an introduction to oncologic principles is included in a pocket manual. For residents and practitioners, this book represents a refresher course regarding many basic science principles of oncology, including a quick reference on specific cancers in the second part of the book.

Criticisms of this book would include a lack of references in some of the chapters. There is a table of contents but no index, making it dif-

ficult to find specific material within the book. The staging classifications in the figures are a bit unclear at times.

In general, however, this book would be useful to students and residents. If the price is reasonable, this book would be handy to keep in one's office. Its utility is clearly as a concise reference, not as a detailed textbook for specific therapy or patient management.

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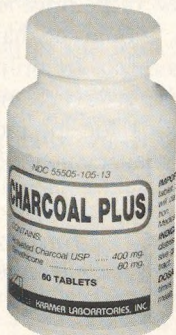
Year Book of Family Practice—1990. Robert E. Rakel (ed), Robert F. Avant, Charles E. Driscoll, John G. Prichard, Charles E. Smith (assoc eds). Year Book Medical Publishers, Chicago, 1990, 516 pp, \$51.95. ISBN 0-8151-7227-3.

The stated purpose of the *Year Book of Family Practice* is to assist the family physician in remaining current with recent advances in medicine. The 14th edition admirably accomplishes this goal. The editors survey 700 US and foreign medical and allied health journals, reviewing more than 20,000 articles annually. This year, selections of articles deemed to have importance to the practicing family physician were made from 130 journals. The main selection criterion seems to be to choose important articles representing significant advances from a variety of fields that may affect clinical practice.

The book is well organized and is divided by specialty areas with subsections dealing with major disease and organ system categories. Each of the articles is summarized and accompanied by editorial commentary

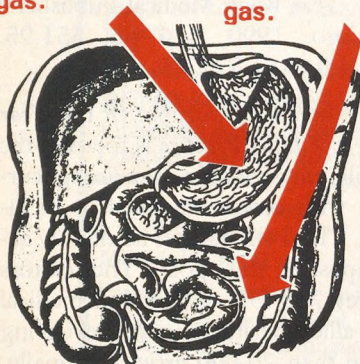
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and analysis. While quite useful and insightful, one wonders whether there is not an editorial tendency to accept the articles at face value, and one wishes that the experienced academic family physician editors and associate editors would critique the experimental design and technique more frequently.

The *1990 Year Book* will be useful to both practicing family physicians and to family practice residents. The material has been appropriately selected and is quite relevant to family medicine. The printing is of good quality and many graphs are included. Perhaps the best use of this text will be as the component of a continuing medical education plan that provides an exposure to recent advances throughout all fields of medicine.

This 14th edition marks the last *Year Book of Family Practice* that will be edited by Robert Rakel. For the past 14 years Dr Rakel and his team of associate editors have performed a valuable service to family medicine by editing this book. As the *Year Book* enters a new editorial era, it remains a significant setpiece in the family physician's selection of tools with which to stay current.

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Problem-Oriented Pediatric Diagnosis. Roger M. Barkin. Little, Brown & Company, Boston, 1990, 306 pp, \$22.50 (paper). ISBN 316-08102-7.

This spiral-bound handbook provides the reader with succinct and practical guidance for evaluating the 50 or so most common pediatric problems. Each clinical problem, discussed by etiologic considerations and diagnostic approaches, is sup-

ported by helpful tables, flow charts, and appendices. It is not the goal of the handbook to outline treatment recommendations. The author suggests that the reader use more comprehensive texts to assist in outlining treatment plans. This handbook helps the reader make diagnoses, given either symptoms (such as headache, ear pain, or cough) or findings (lymphadenopathy, anemia, or rash).

The audience best served by this handbook is medical students, pediatrics and family practice residents, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. They will find it a reassuring reference when evaluating children or doing telephone triage. It fits neatly into a laboratory coat pocket. Many practicing physicians will use it to make sure they have "thought of everything" when seeing a sick child, to assure themselves that their differential diagnosis is complete. The handbook has handy reference tables that show normal vital signs, growth curves, laboratory values, and frequently used pediatric drugs. There is a section that contains about 40 one-page instructions for parents, telling them what to look for, when to call or see their physician, or what they can do for their ill child. I tested the book with some problems commonly seen in family practice, such as lymphadenopathy, hematuria, limping gait, and constipation, and found it helpful and complete. It is easy to find one's way around the book.

In summary, it is a handy book to have at one's fingertips, especially for medical students and residents and for anyone who takes care of children and occasionally feels the need for assistance in making accurate pediatric diagnoses.

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